

(Washington, DC) — “I am pleased that the Joint Finance Committee approved the W-2 program changes proposed by Gov. Jim Doyle. With the rapid increase of caseloads due to the recession, now more than ever, families are in need of assistance in order to rise out of poverty.

The extension of time limits and allowing W-2 recipients to count education and training programs as work activity are common sense provisions that will provide long term assistance for individuals who have been hardest hit by our nation’s ailing economy. For instance, we have seen that education and training is absolutely key for low-income individuals trying to further their skills so they can obtain living-wage jobs that can support their families in the long term.

It is of the utmost importance that we provide low-income individuals with an opportunity to further their education and obtain permanent high paying jobs. Education is the key ingredient in guaranteeing an individual’s success in the workforce and it is the essential tool needed to promote independency rather than dependency on government assistance.

The common-sense Joint Finance changes will cut unnecessary red tape and increase the effectiveness of our efforts to help Wisconsin individuals lift their families out of poverty. But this is only the first step. It is my hope that this will open the door for even further reforms to both the W-2 program in Wisconsin and the federal TANF program when it is up for reauthorization later this Congress.

This has been a career long effort of mine to humanize the W-2 program: the rules need to work for those trying to lift themselves out of poverty, and at the same time, we must always make it a priority for there to be a safety net for the growing number of needy families.”

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